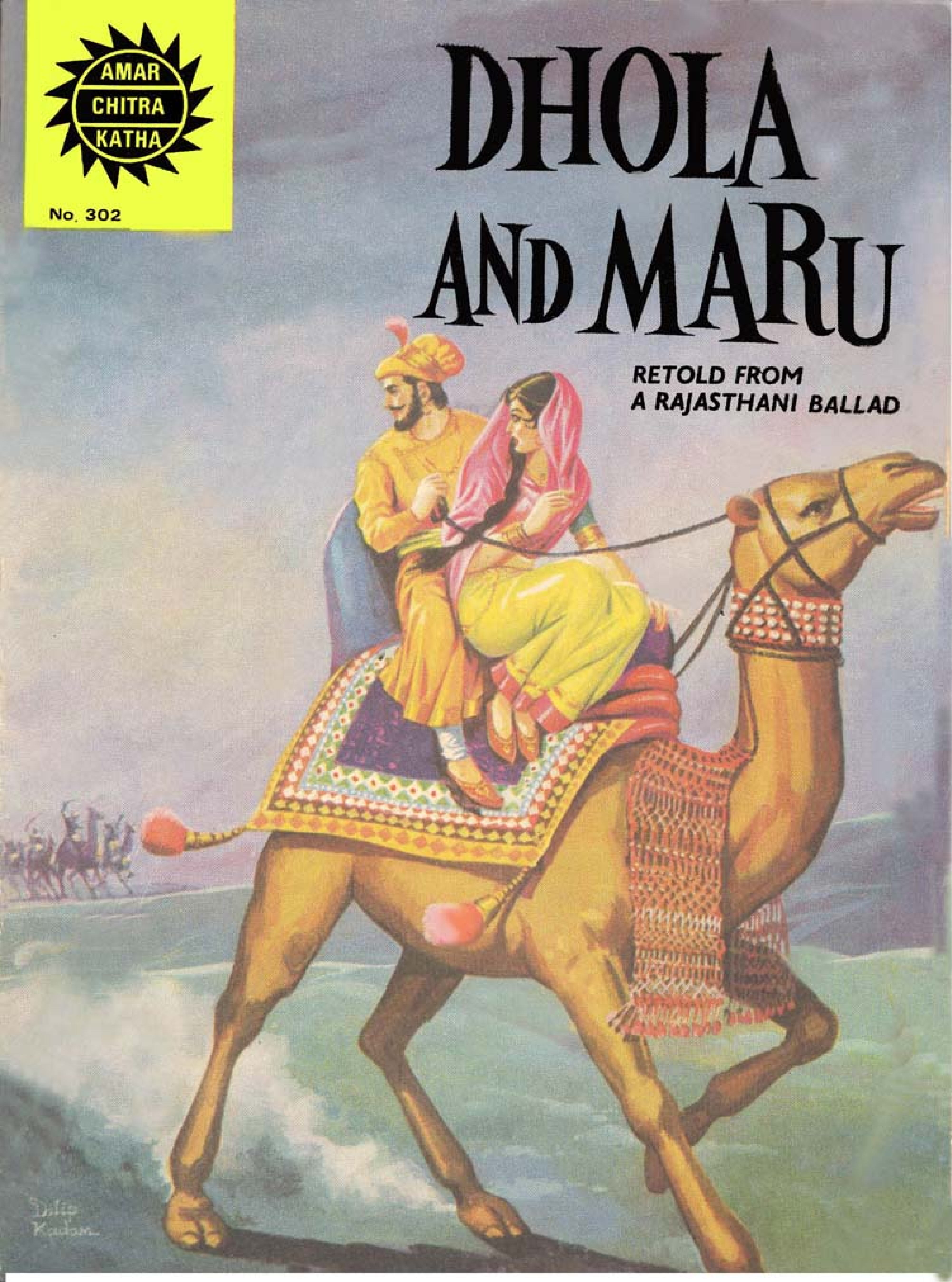
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

No. 302

DHOLA AND MARU

RETOLD FROM A RAJASTHANI BALLAD



Amar Chitra Katha

Editor
ANANT PAI
Associate Editors
KAMALA CHANDRAKANT
SUBBA RAO
Material provided by
Prof. BEATRICE BENJAMIN
Art Consultant
RAM WAEERKAR
Script
GAYATRI MADAN DUTT
Artworks
DILIP KADAM
Production
GOVIND KOTWANI

Published by:
H. G. MIRCHANDANI
for IBH Publishers Pvt. Ltd.,
Mahalaxmi Chambers,
22, Bhulabhai Desai Road,
Bombay 400 026 and printed by him
at IBH Printers, Marol Naka,
Mathuradas Vissanji Road,
Andheri (East), Bombay 400 059.

Dhola and Maru

The ballad of Dhola and Maru was composed in 1620 by Kallol, a poet who lived in the reign of Raval Hariraj of Jaisalmer, in Dingal, the language used by ancient bards of Rajasthan.

One bitter fact of life in Rajasthan is drought. It destroys life as quickly as water creates it. The ballad goes that the bards sent to Narwar by Pingal sing the Raag Malhaar (the musical mode reputed to create rain) on the night that they reveal Maru's existence to Dhola. And sure enough, it rains with much thunder and lightning. It is interesting to note the specific mention of Raag Malhaar in the ballad; a Raag that conjures up the vision of rain in a land threatened with drought!

There is a set of fine paintings, rendered in the Jodhpur style, illustrating the love of Dhola and Maru.

Dhola and Maru

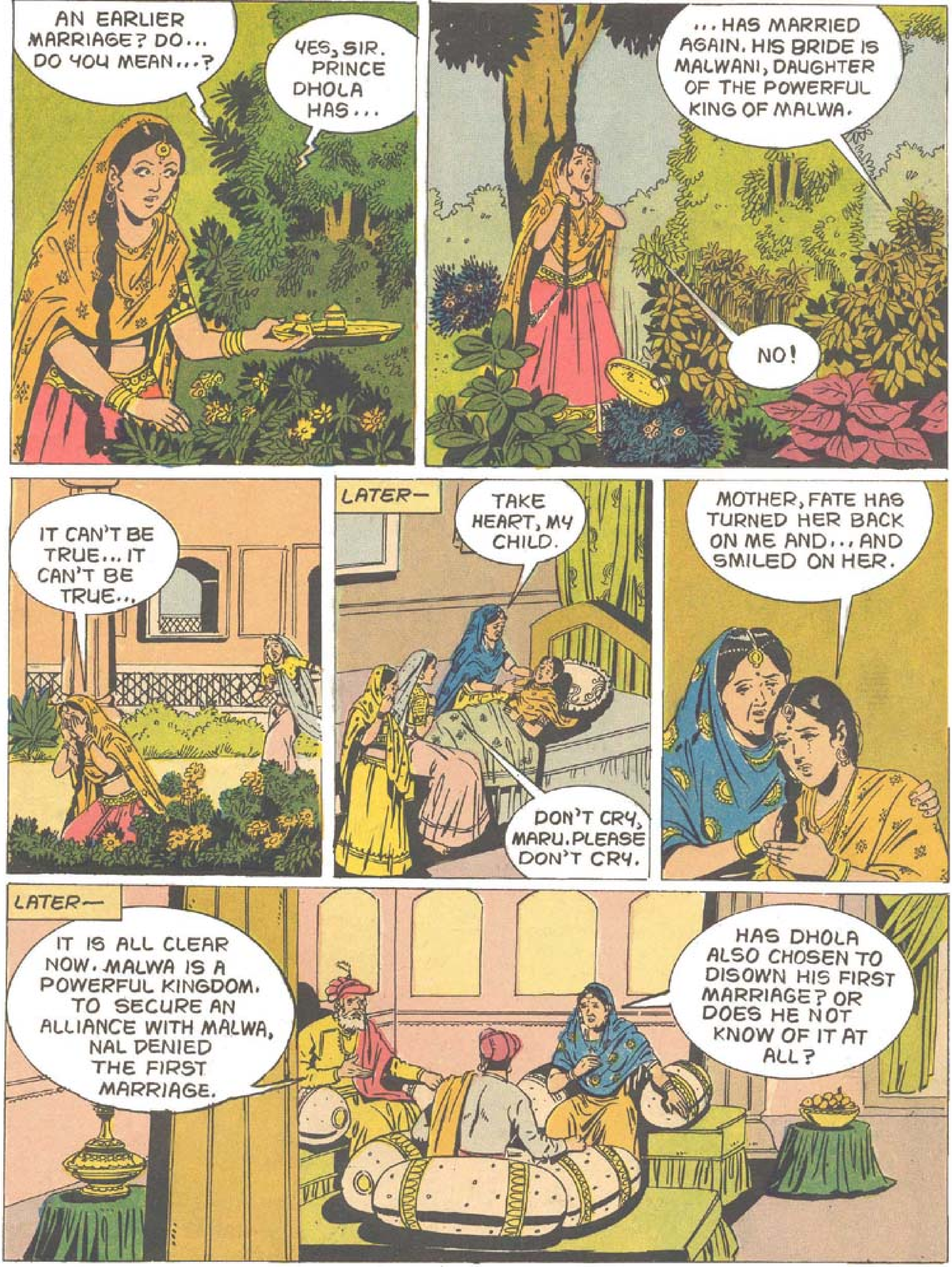




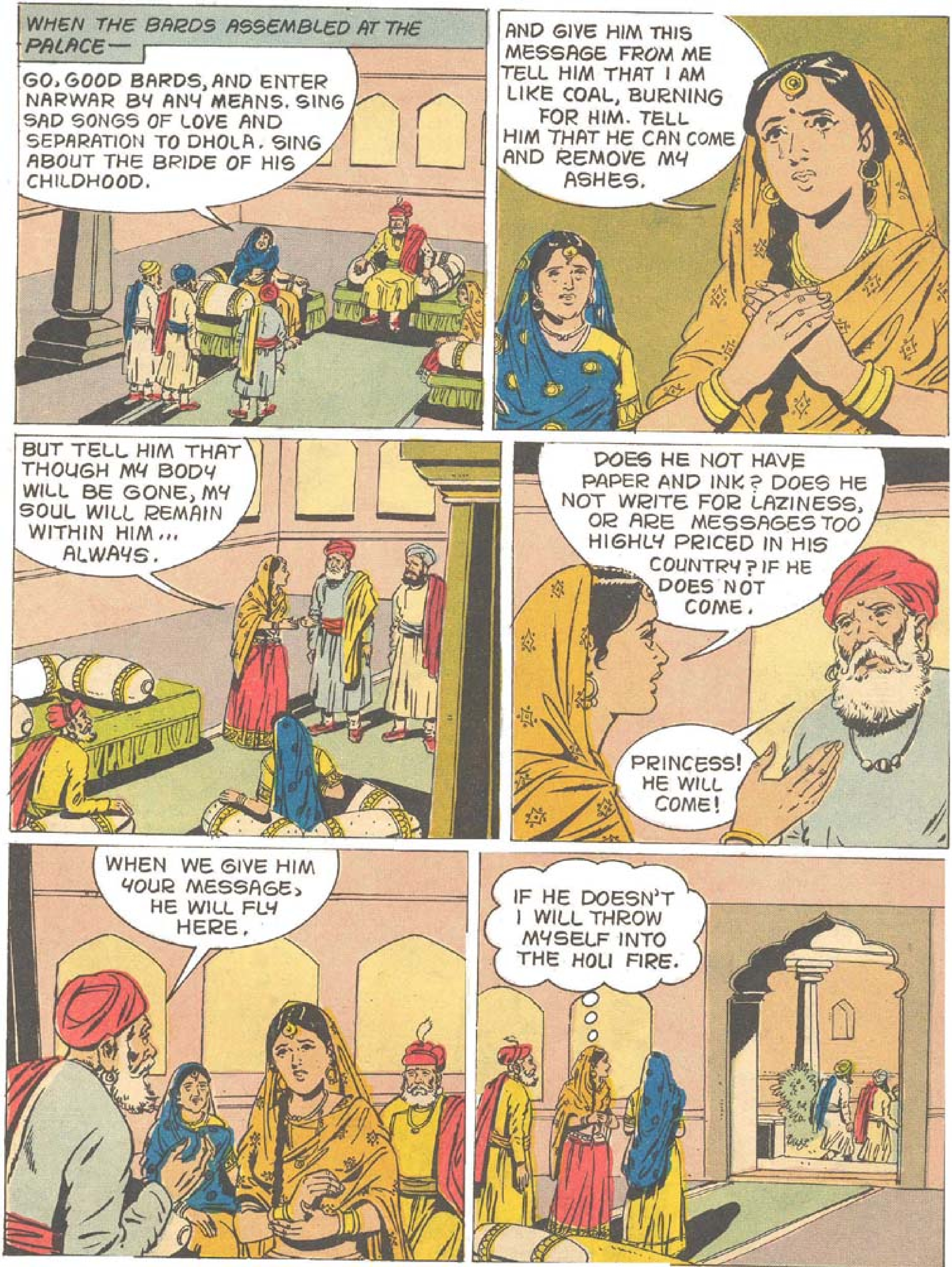
* A BIRD CALL THAT SOUNDS LIKE 'COME MY BELOVED'

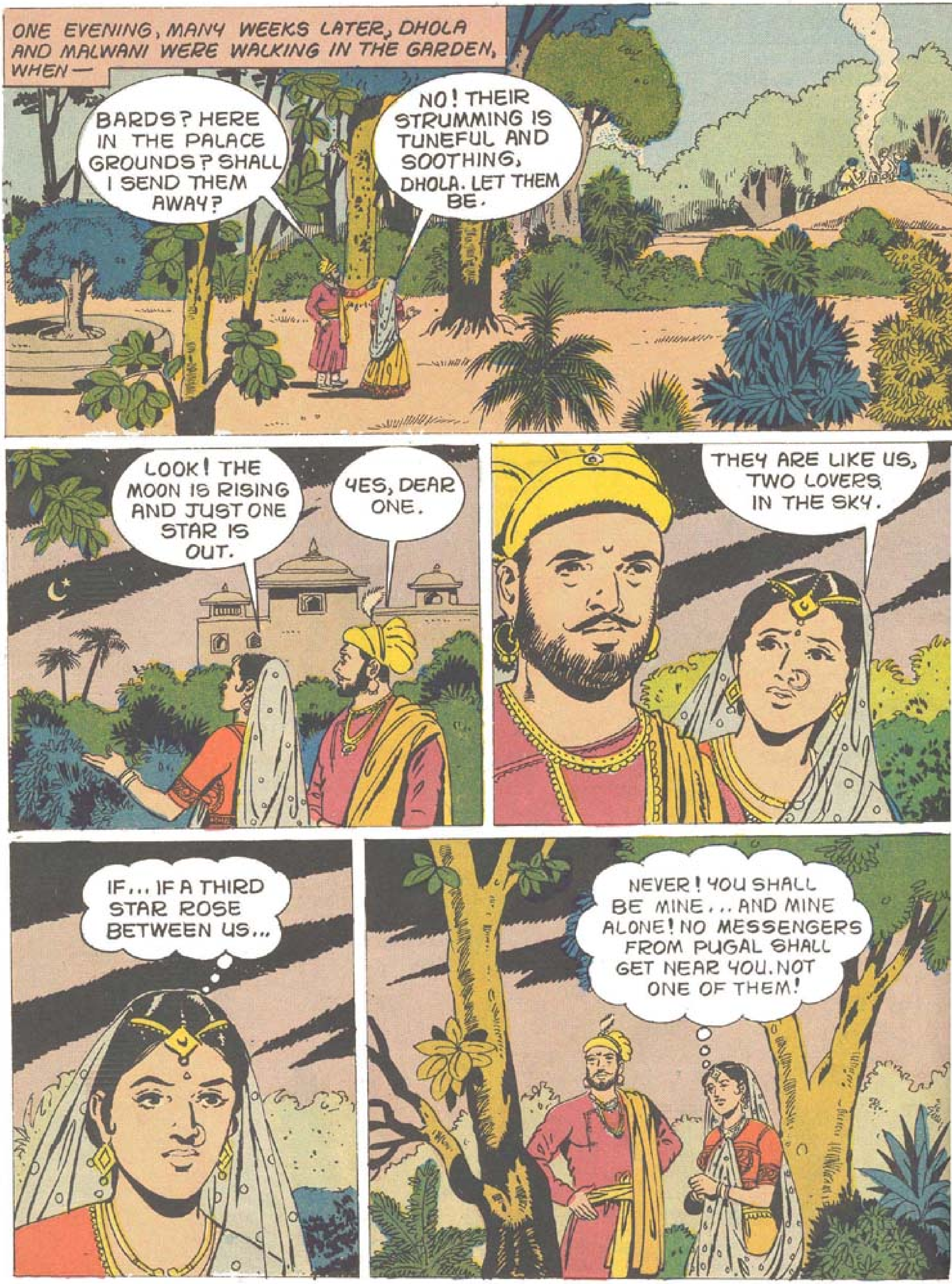

DEAR BIRDS, LEND ME YOUR WINGS SO THAT I MAY FLY TO MY LOVE.
NO, MARU. WE CANNOT LEND YOU OUR WINGS.
BUT YOU CAN WRITE TO YOUR BELOVED ON THEM. WE'LL CARRY YOUR MESSAGE TO HIM.
THAT WOULDN'T DO. IF WATER FELL ON YOUR WINGS THE INK WOULD BE WASHED OFF!
OH, WIND, GO WHERE MY LOVE IS! THEN COME BACK AND TOUCH ME.
MEANWHILE, A HORSE-TRADER FROM WHOM MARU'S FATHER HAD BOUGHT SEVERAL STEEDS CAME TO SEE HIM.
SALUTATIONS, SIR. I HAVE COME TO THANK YOU FOR...


SIR! THAT YOUNG LADY THERE! WHO IS SHE?
MY DAUGHTER, MARU. SHE IS... COME, LET US SIT DOWN.
FRIEND TRADER, YOU MUST HAVE JOURNEYED FAR AND WIDE. HAVE YOUR TRAVELS EVER TAKEN YOU TO NARWAR?
WHY, I HAVE JUST COME FROM NARWAR, SIR!
HAVE YOU? FOR SOME YEARS NOW I HAVE BEEN SENDING MESSENGERS TO RAJA NAL OF NARWAR, BUT THEY HAVE NEVER RETURNED.
THERE'S BEEN NO NEWS FROM NAL EITHER. BUT IT'S TIME HE SENT FOR MY MARU. WHEN STILL A CHILD, SHE WAS MARRIED TO PRINCE DHOLA OF NARWAR.
SIR! SO IT IS YOUR DAUGHTER! I HEARD RUMOURS AT NARWAR THAT THERE HAD BEEN AN EARLIER MARRIAGE.


AN EARLIER MARRIAGE? DO... DO YOU MEAN...?
YES, SIR. PRINCE DHOLA HAS...
...HAS MARRIED AGAIN. HIS BRIDE IS MALWANI, DAUGHTER OF THE POWERFUL KING OF MALWA.
NO!
IT CAN'T BE TRUE... IT CAN'T BE TRUE...
LATER—
TAKE HEART, MY CHILD.
DON'T CRY, MARU. PLEASE DON'T CRY.
MOTHER, FATE HAS TURNED HER BACK ON ME AND... AND SMILED ON HER.
LATER—
IT IS ALL CLEAR NOW. MALWA IS A POWERFUL KINGDOM. TO SECURE AN ALLIANCE WITH MALWA, NAL DENIED THE FIRST MARRIAGE.
HAS DHOLA ALSO CHOSEN TO DISOWN HIS FIRST MARRIAGE? OR DOES HE NOT KNOW OF IT AT ALL?


I THINK HE DOESN'T REMEMBER. THERE IS ANOTHER RUMOUR RIFE IN NARWAR.
PRINCESS MALWANI HAS BEEN THROWING MANY MEN INTO PRISON.
THOSE MEN MUST BE THE MESSENGERS YOU SENT.
BUT HOW DID SHE COME TO KNOW ABOUT THE FIRST MARRIAGE?
SHE TOO MUST HAVE HEARD THE RUMOURS AND FOUND THEM TO BE TRUE.
THEN... THEN WHY DON'T WE SEND SOME BARDS TO NARWAR TO REMIND DHOLA OF MARU?
AN EXCELLENT IDEA!


WHEN THE BARDS ASSEMBLED AT THE PALACE—
GO, GOOD BARDS, AND ENTER NARWAR BY ANY MEANS. SING SAD SONGS OF LOVE AND SEPARATION TO DHOLA. SING ABOUT THE BRIDE OF HIS CHILDHOOD.
AND GIVE HIM THIS MESSAGE FROM ME TELL HIM THAT I AM LIKE COAL, BURNING FOR HIM. TELL HIM THAT HE CAN COME AND REMOVE MY ASHES.
BUT TELL HIM THAT THOUGH MY BODY WILL BE GONE, MY SOUL WILL REMAIN WITHIN HIM... ALWAYS.
DOES HE NOT HAVE PAPER AND INK? DOES HE NOT WRITE FOR LAZINESS, OR ARE MESSAGES TOO HIGHLY PRICED IN HIS COUNTRY? IF HE DOES NOT COME.
PRINCESS! HE WILL COME!
WHEN WE GIVE HIM YOUR MESSAGE, HE WILL FLY HERE.
IF HE DOESN'T I WILL THROW MYSELF INTO THE HOLI FIRE.


ONE EVENING, MANY WEEKS LATER, DHOLA AND MALWANI WERE WALKING IN THE GARDEN, WHEN —
BARDS? HERE IN THE PALACE GROUNDS? SHALL I SEND THEM AWAY?
NO! THEIR STRUMMING IS TUNEFUL AND SOOTHING, DHOLA. LET THEM BE.
LOOK! THE MOON IS RISING AND JUST ONE STAR IS OUT.
YES, DEAR ONE.
THEY ARE LIKE US, TWO LOVERS IN THE SKY.
IF... IF A THIRD STAR ROSE BETWEEN US...
NEVER! YOU SHALL BE MINE... AND MINE ALONE! NO MESSENGERS FROM PUGAL SHALL GET NEAR YOU. NOT ONE OF THEM!


IT'S GETTING DARK. SHALL I GO IN AND SEE TO OUR EVENING MEAL?
GO, DEAR ONE. I'LL JOIN YOU LATER.
WHEN MALWANI HAD GONE—
HOW PEACEFUL IS THE TWILIGHT HOUR! HOW CALM AND QUIET THE AIR!
JUST THEN—
THERE ONCE WAS A CHILD NAMED DHOLA...
?!
... WHOSE FATHER WAS THE KING OF NARWAR, AND AT PUSHKAR LAKE MANY YEARS AGO...
... THE HAND OF A BABY PRINCESS WAS GIVEN UNTO PRINCE DHOLA.


PRINCESS MARU OF PUGAL WAS MARRIED TO DHOLA, IN THAT TENT MANY YEARS AGO. NOW SHE PINES, WHILE HE HAS FORGOTTEN ... OH, DHOLA, HOW COULD YOU? HOW COULD YOU?
OH GOD! IS IT POSSIBLE?
SOON—
GOOD SIRS, THAT BALLAD YOU WERE JUST SINGING... IS IT TRUE?
IT IS TRUE. I WAS PRESENT AT THE WEDDING.
TELL ME ABOUT IT. I MUST KNOW. I AM PRINCE DHOLA.
YES, WE KNOW. IT HAPPENED AT PUSHKAR LAKE FIFTEEN YEARS AGO. YOU WERE LITTLE CHILDREN THEN, YOU AND MARU.


MUCH LATER—
DHOLA, I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU TO JOIN ME. INSTEAD YOU SIT HERE LOST IN THOUGHT. WHAT IS IT?
IT'S... IT'S NOTHING.
MALWANI, I WAS THINKING... I WANT TO LEAVE NARWAR FOR A WHILE. I'LL GO TO IDAR AND BUY SOME OF THOSE FAMOUS JEWELS FOR YOU.
NO, DHOLA. I DON'T WANT ANY JEWELS. I AM CONTENT WITH THE JEWELS I HAVE.



OR I COULD GO TO GUJARAT TO GET SOME OF ITS FINE CLOTH FOR YOU.
EQUALLY GOOD CLOTH IS AVAILABLE HERE, DHOLA.
MALWANI, TRAVEL MAKES ONE WISE. ONE LEARNS A LOT ABOUT PEOPLE AND ABOUT ONESELF!
WHY DO YOU SUDDENLY WANT TO LEAVE YOUR BEAUTIFUL KINGDOM, YOUR PALACE AND YOUR WIFE WHO WILL GIVE HER LIFE FOR YOU? I WANT THE TRUTH, DHOLA.
I... I WANT TO SEE PRINCESS MARU OF PUGAL. I WAS MARRIED TO HER IN MY CHILDHOOD.
DHOLA, DHOLA... I HAVE LOST YOU...
NO, MALWANI! I LOVE YOU.
BUT MARU TOO IS MY WIFE. I MUST GO TO HER. DON'T STOP ME, MALWANI.

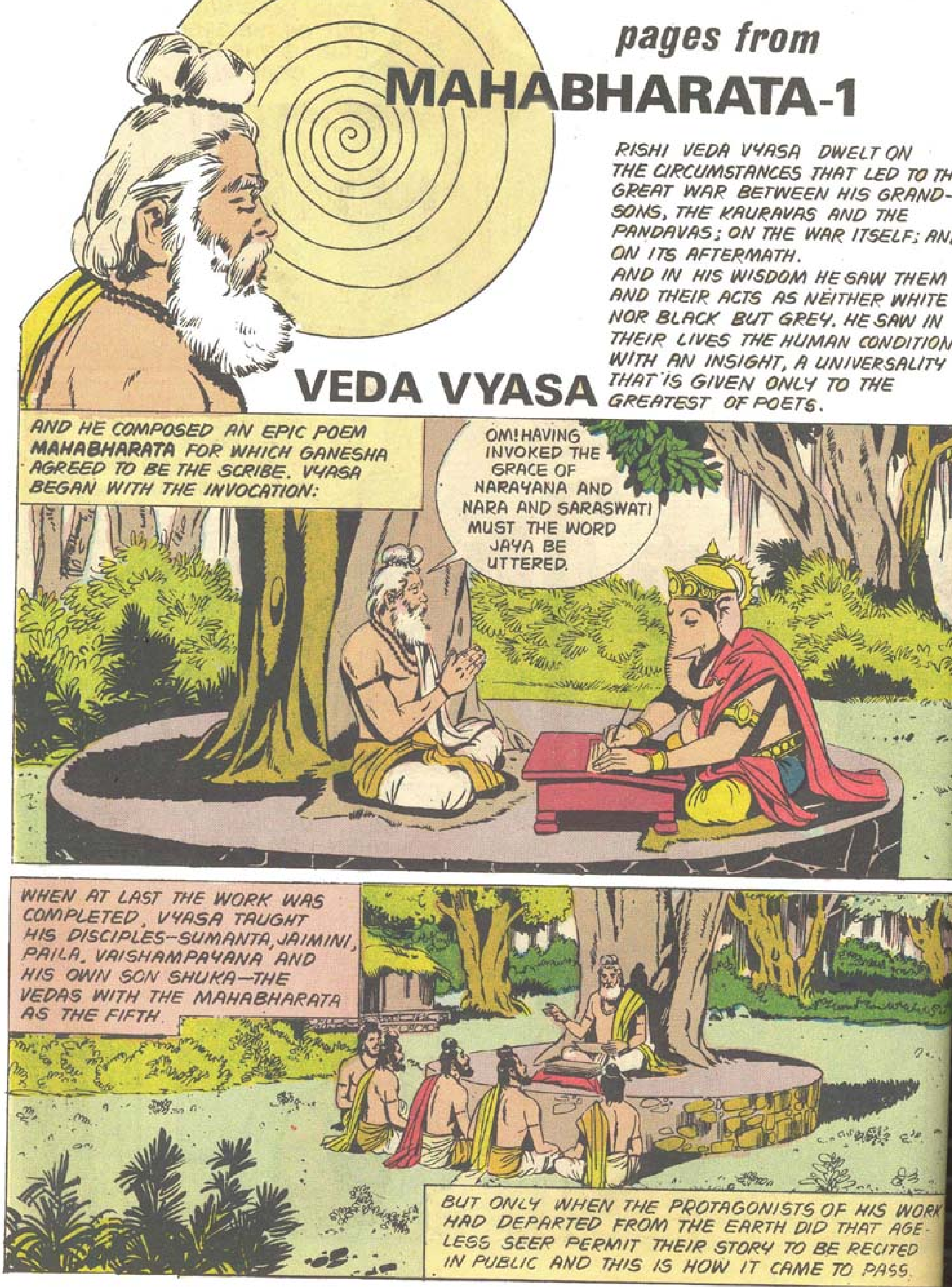

AND SOON—
WHICH OF YOU HERE WILL TAKE ME TO MY BRIDE—PRINCESS MARU OF PUGAL?
I WILL, PRINCE DHOLA. I AM STRONG. I EAT GOOD FOOD AND DRINK PURE GANGA WATER. PLEASURE AND PAIN ARE ALIKE TO ME. I WILL TAKE YOU.
SO, MY MASTER, FIX THE BRIDLE ON ME. TIE MUSICAL BELLS ROUND MY NECK AND I WILL TAKE YOU TO MARU WHENEVER YOU WISH.
THANK YOU, DEAR FRIEND.

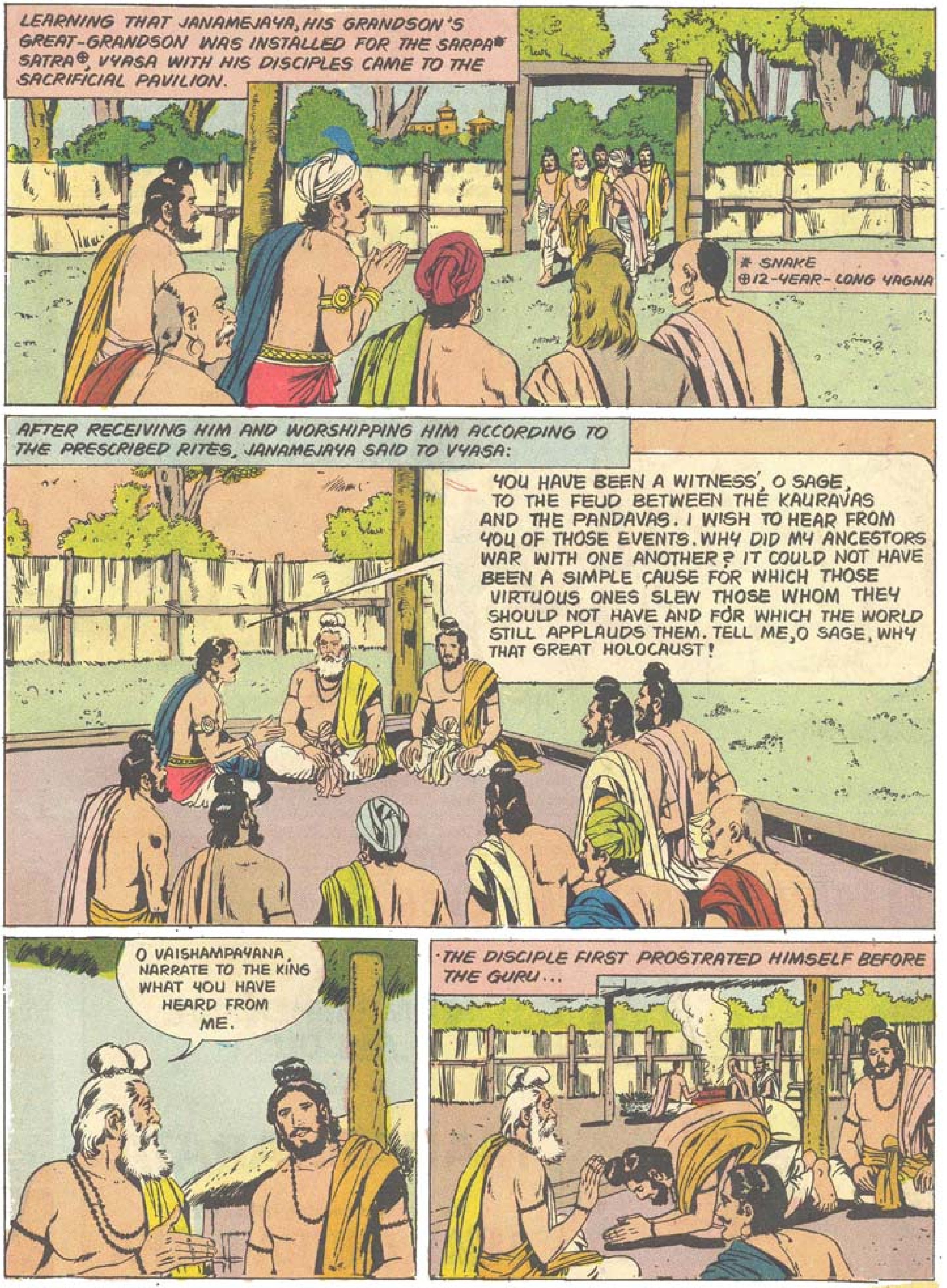


A FEW MINUTES LATER —
NOBLE CAMEL, PLEASE TAKE PITY ON ME. DON'T CARRY MY DHOLA TO MARU.
PRETEN THAT YO ARE LA
AND IF I AM FOUND OUT? I WILL BE BEATEN AND STARVED TO DEATH. IF I TAKE THE PRINCE TO HIS BRIDE'S HOUSE, THEY WILL GIVE ME GOOD FOOD TO EAT.
I WILL GIVE YOU GOOD FOOD. I WILL TIE YOU IN THE SHADE OF A BANYAN TREE AND RUB YOUR BODY WITH SWEET SMELLING OIL. I ALSO PROMISE THAT YOU SHALL NOT BE BRANDED.
THESE ARE TEMPTING OFFERS. BUT PRINCESS, I CANNOT BETRAY MY MASTER. I AM SORRY.
LATER IN THE PALACE —
DHOLA, HOT WINDS ARE BLOWING THROUGH THAT DESERT KINGDOM. DON'T GO JUST NOW.
I... ALL RIGHT.



CONTD. ON PAGE 19


pages from
MAHABHARATA-1
RISHI VEDA VYASA DWELT ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT LED TO TH GREAT WAR BETWEEN HIS GRAND-SONS, THE KAURAVAS AND THE PANDAVAS; ON THE WAR ITSELF; AN ON ITS AFTERMATH.
AND IN HIS WISDOM HE SAW THEM AND THEIR ACTS AS NEITHER WHITE NOR BLACK BUT GREY. HE SAW IN THEIR LIVES THE HUMAN CONDITION WITH AN INSIGHT, A UNIVERSALITY THAT IS GIVEN ONLY TO THE GREATEST OF POETS.
VEDA VYASA
AND HE COMPOSED AN EPIC POEM MAHABHARATA FOR WHICH GANESHA AGREED TO BE THE SCRIBE. VYASA BEGAN WITH THE INVOCATION:
OM! HAVING INVOKED THE GRACE OF NARAYANA AND NARA AND SARASWATI MUST THE WORD JAYA BE UTTERED.
WHEN AT LAST THE WORK WAS COMPLETED, VYASA TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES—SUMANTA, JAIMINI, PAILA, VAISHAMPAYANA AND HIS OWN SON SHUKA—THE VEDAS WITH THE MAHABHARATA AS THE FIFTH.
BUT ONLY WHEN THE PROTAGONISTS OF HIS WORK HAD DEPARTED FROM THE EARTH DID THAT AGE-LESS SEER PERMIT THEIR STORY TO BE RECITED IN PUBLIC AND THIS IS HOW IT CAME TO PASS.

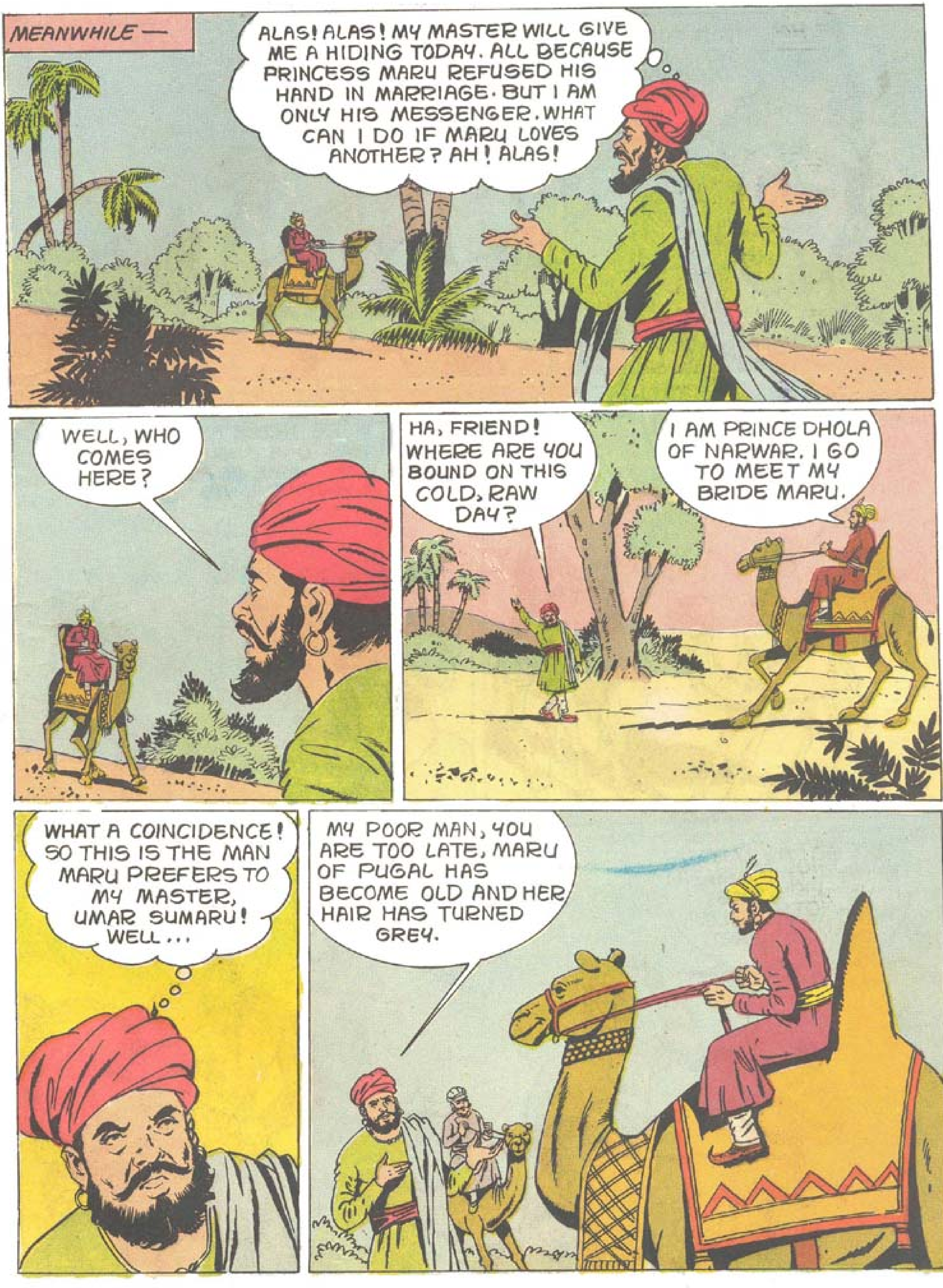

LEARNING THAT JANAMEJAYA, HIS GRANDSON'S GREAT-GRANDSON WAS INSTALLED FOR THE SARPA* SATRA⊕, VYASA WITH HIS DISCIPLES CAME TO THE SACRIFICIAL PAVILION.
* SNAKE
⊕12-YEAR-LONG YAGNA
AFTER RECEIVING HIM AND WORSHIPPING HIM ACCORDING TO THE PRESCRIBED RITES, JANAMEJAYA SAID TO VYASA:
YOU HAVE BEEN A WITNESS, O SAGE, TO THE FEUD BETWEEN THE KAURAVAS AND THE PANDAVAS. I WISH TO HEAR FROM YOU OF THOSE EVENTS. WHY DID MY ANCESTORS WAR WITH ONE ANOTHER? IT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN A SIMPLE CAUSE FOR WHICH THOSE VIRTUOUS ONES SLEW THOSE WHOM THEY SHOULD NOT HAVE AND FOR WHICH THE WORLD STILL APPLAUDS THEM. TELL ME, O SAGE, WHY THAT GREAT HOLOCAUST!
O VAISHAMPAYANA, NARRATE TO THE KING WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD FROM ME.
THE DISCIPLE FIRST PROSTRATED HIMSELF BEFORE THE GURU...

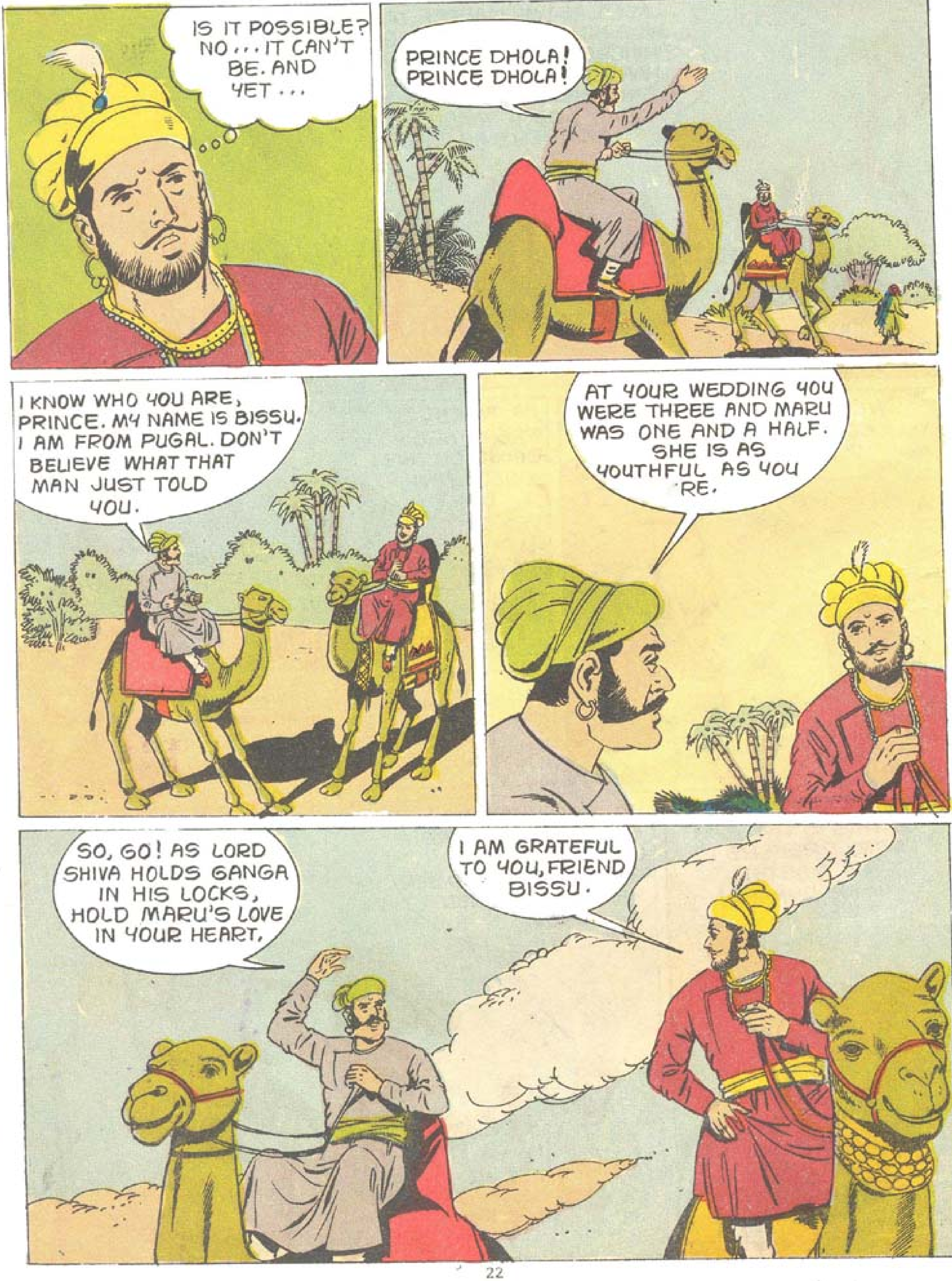

...AND THEN ADDRESSED THE KING.
O MONARCH, I SHALL RECITE IT. BUT THIS HISTORY TOLD BY RISHI VYASA CONSISTS OF OVER A HUNDRED THOUSAND VERSES AND WILL TAKE TIME.
IT IS A DISCOURSE ON DHARMA*, ON ARTHA*, ON KAMA*. WHAT IS CONTAINED IN THIS WORK ABOUT VIRTUE, WEALTH, PLEASURE AND SALVATION MAY BE SEEN ELSEWHERE. BUT...
...WHATEVER IS NOT CONTAINED IN THIS IS NOT TO BE FOUND ANYWHERE. HE THAT KNOWS IT MAY BE REGARDED AS ONE WHO KNOWS THE VEDAS.
* DHARMA (ONE'S DUTY) * ARTHA (WEALTH) * KAMA (THE FULFILMENT OF DESIRES)
AND THESE WORDS HOLD GOOD TO THIS DAY AS ALL WHO HAVE READ VYASA'S IMMORTAL WORK AND TRIED TO IMBIBE ITS ESSENCE WILL AGREE.


AND SO—
PRINCESS, IT IS FIFTEEN NIGHTS SINCE YOU SLEPT.
TO KEEP MY DHOLA BY ME, I CAN KEEP AWAKE FOR... FOR...
... MONTHS... IF... NECESSARY...
POOR MALWANI! ASLEEP AT LAST!
SUDDENLY—
OH... WHAT WAS THAT? CAMEL BELLS! DHOLA... WHERE IS MY DHOLA?
HE HAS GONE.
OH, MARU... IS THIS HOW IT FEELS... TO PINE FOR A BELOVED?



BUT SOME HOURS LATER, MANY MILES AWAY—
WHY, ISN'T THAT MALWANI'S PARROT FOLLOWING ME? SO SHE HASN'T GIVEN UP!
PRINCE, PRINCE — COME HOME AT ONCE! MALWANI. JUST FELL UNCONSCIOUS AND DIED.
THEN DO AS I TELL YOU, GOOD PARROT. GO BACK, TAKE NINE MAUNDS OF SANDALWOOD AND CREMATE MALWANI'S BODY WITH ALL CEREMONY.
DEAR PRINCE, WHAT I TOLD YOU WAS NOT TRUE. I KNOW NOW THAT NOTHING CAN STOP YOU FROM GOING TO MARU. FORGIVE ME.
MAY ALL YOUR DESIRES BE FULFILLED. BUT DO NOT FORGET MALWANI WHO IS YOUR HANDMAID.


MEANWHILE —
ALAS! ALAS! MY MASTER WILL GIVE ME A HIDING TODAY. ALL BECAUSE PRINCESS MARU REFUSED HIS HAND IN MARRIAGE. BUT I AM ONLY HIS MESSENGER. WHAT CAN I DO IF MARU LOVES ANOTHER? AH! ALAS!
WELL, WHO COMES HERE?
HA, FRIEND! WHERE ARE YOU BOUND ON THIS COLD, RAW DAY?
I AM PRINCE DHOLA OF NARWAR. I GO TO MEET MY BRIDE MARU.
WHAT A COINCIDENCE! SO THIS IS THE MAN MARU PREFERS TO MY MASTER, UMAR SUMARU! WELL ...
MY POOR MAN, YOU ARE TOO LATE, MARU OF PUGAL HAS BECOME OLD AND HER HAIR HAS TURNED GREY.


IS IT POSSIBLE? NO... IT CAN'T BE. AND YET...
PRINCE DHOLA! PRINCE DHOLA!
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, PRINCE. MY NAME IS BISSU. I AM FROM PUGAL. DON'T BELIEVE WHAT THAT MAN JUST TOLD YOU.
AT YOUR WEDDING YOU WERE THREE AND MARU WAS ONE AND A HALF. SHE IS AS YOUTHFUL AS YOU 'RE.
SO, GO! AS LORD SHIVA HOLDS GANGA IN HIS LOCKS, HOLD MARU'S LOVE IN YOUR HEART.
I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU, FRIEND BISSU.

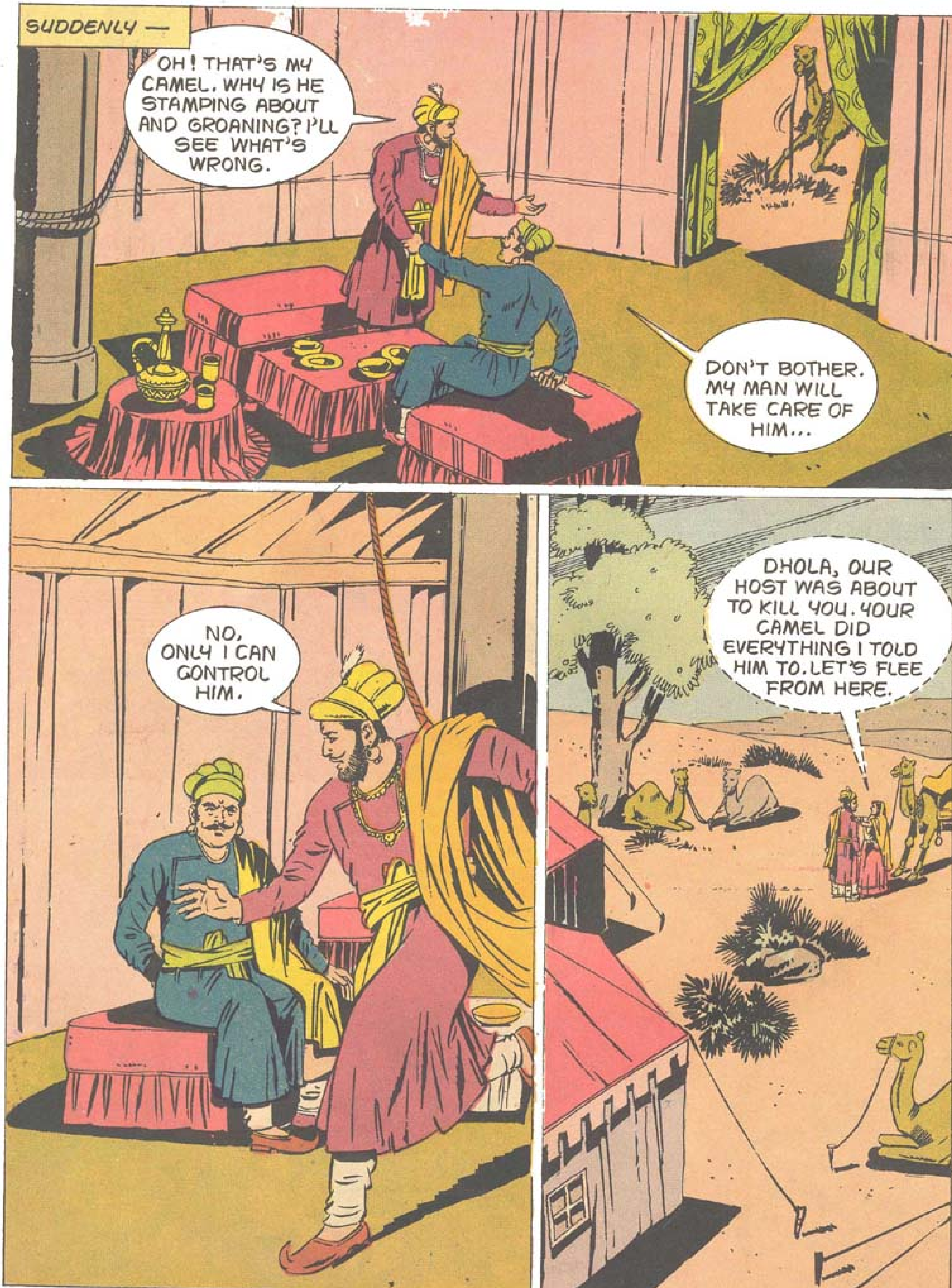

WE ARE ABOUT TO CROSS THE DESERT, PRINCE DHOLA. IN THE DESERT THERE IS NO GRASS, NO WATER, JUST BURNING SUN AND STERILE SAND.
THEN DRINK ENOUGH WATER NOW, MY FRIEND, TO SUSTAIN YOURSELF.
NOW, RUN AS FAST AS YOU CAN. TAKE THE FORM OF A GIANT AND WITH GIANT STRIDES TAKE ME TO MY WIFE.
FASTER! YOU ARE TOO SLOW!
I MUST REACH PUGAL BEFORE THE LAMPS ARE LIT.
PATIENCE, PRINCE. TIGHTEN YOUR TURBAN. KEEP MY BRIDLE LOOSE. I WILL CARRY YOU TO PUGAL BY SUNDOWN.


AND SOON, AT PUGAL —
FATHER, MOTHER — I HAVE COME.
IS IT REALLY YOU, DHOLA? GO — MARU IS WAITING FOR YOU.
MARU, QUICK! DECK YOURSELF, FOR T LAST, DHOLA HAS...
MARU!


MARU! IT IS I—DHOLA!
NOW, I SHALL NEVER LET YOU GO.
HOW IS IT, MARU, THAT YOUR BODY SUDDENLY GLOWS LIKE GOLD?
DHOLA...
...FROGS THAT LIE ALMOST DEAD IN THE SUMMER HEAT, COME OUT IN LARGE NUMBERS WHEN THE RAINS FALL.
YOU HAVE COME LIKE RAIN AND BROUGHT ME BACK TO LIFE.


FIFTEEN HAPPY DAYS LATER —
I AM TAKING MY MARU HOME. THANK YOU FOR YOUR LOVE AND YOUR HOSPITALITY.
GOODBYE, BELOVED PARENTS.
LATER, ON THE WAY —
HO, THERE! ARE YOU ALONE?
WE SENT OUR MEN AHEAD, SIR.
I AM THE CHIEFTAIN OF THESE PARTS. IT'S BEEN A HOT DAY. STOP AND REST AT MY CAMP.
THAT IS KIND OF YOU. WE WILL DO SO.


LATER, THAT EVENING —
DHOLA IS ENJOYING THE FEAST... BUT... WHY IS THAT MAN TAKING UP A KNIFE FROM BEHIND HIM?
JUST THEN —
MARU! MARU! I AM A FEMALE BARD FROM PUGAL— A FRIEND. LISTEN! YOUR HOST IS NONE OTHER THAN UMAR SUMARU, THE SUITOR YOU ONCE REJECTED.
HE IS ABOUT TO KILL DHOLA AND CAPTURE YOU. QUICK! DO SOMETHING TO GET DHOLA AWAY FROM THERE.


SUDDENLY —
OH! THAT'S MY CAMEL. WHY IS HE STAMPING ABOUT AND GROANING? I'LL SEE WHAT'S WRONG.
DON'T BOTHER. MY MAN WILL TAKE CARE OF HIM...
NO, ONLY I CAN CONTROL HIM.
DHOLA, OUR HOST WAS ABOUT TO KILL YOU. YOUR CAMEL DID EVERYTHING I TOLD HIM TO. LET'S FLEE FROM HERE.


BUT —
THE SOUND OF CAMEL HOOVES. THEY'RE ESCAPING. FOLLOW THEM.
KILL THE MAN, BUT I WANT THE LADY ALIVE. HURRY!
FASTER, MY FRIEND! FASTER!
AT LAST —
THE GATES OF NARWAR! WE'RE SAFE.
OF COURSE, WE'RE SAFE PRINCE DHOL
DID YOU THINK I WOULD LET YOU DOWN?


AND SOON —
MARU, MY DAUGHTER; CAN YOU FORGIVE US FOR ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED?
MY FATHER, IT WAS ALL A TRICK OF FATE.
MALWANI...
...ALL THIS TIME, IT WAS YOU WHO GAVE DHOLA YOUR LOVE, CARE AND DEVOTION. I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU, MY SISTER.


OH, MARU! FORGIVE ME...
THERE IS NOTHING TO FORGIVE. LET US LIVE TOGETHER HAPPILY.
WHERE THERE IS LOVE THERE CAN ONLY BE HAPPINESS.
AND SO—
MAY OUR CHILDREN LIVE IN SUCH HARMONY ALWAYS.


HANUMAN
TO THE RESCUE
RAJU, OPEN YOUR EYES. SEE WHAT HANUMAN HAS BROUGHT.
AMAR CHITRA KATHA!
AMAR CHITRA KATHA!



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